

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1729

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 5714

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PINT KS

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH CARDINAL KIM SU-KWON

1. JULY 28, NEWLY ARRIVED LABOR/POLITICAL OFFICER PAID COURTESY CALL ON CARDINAL KIM. DURING COURSE OF 45 MINUTE CONVERSATION CARDINAL URGED CONTINUED INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION TO KIM CHI-HA TRIAL AS FORM OF PRESSURE ON ROKG. HE ATTRIBUTED CURRENT PERIOD OF QUIET TO SPLIT IN RANKS OF ANTI-GOVERNMENT FORCES, GOVERNMENT PRESSURES AND GENUINE CONCERN OVER SECURITY SITUATION.

2. ON TRIAL OF POET KIM CHI-HA, CARDINAL THOUGHT THAT PROCESS WOULD NOW MOVE ALONG FAIRLY SWIFTLY SINCE SUPREME COURT HAD REJECTED KIM'S CHALLENGE OF PRESIDING JUDGE. HE SAID HE HOPED KIM WOULD NOT RECEIVE DEATH PENALTY THOUGH THAT CANNOT BE RULED OUT COMPLETELY. HE NOTED THAT KIM ALREADY SENTENCED TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT STEMMING FROM ACTIVITIES PROHIBITED UNDER EMERGENCY MEASURES AND ADDED WRYLY THAT ANOTHER LIFE SENTENCE COULDN'T HURT MUCH. AT LEAST HE WOULD BE ALIVE AND ONE COULD CONTINUE TO WORK ON HIS BEHALF CARDINAL SAID. CARDINAL KIM SAID THAT FOR THE MOMENT HE WAS NOT ATTEMPTING TO BRING ANY PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT FOR KIM BECAUSE HE BELIEVED THAT PRESSURE OF THIS KIND FROM WITHIN KOREA OFTEN PRODUCED A STUBBORN EVEN VIOLENT COUNTER REACTION FROM
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THE GOVERNMENT. BETTER, HE SAID, WAS THE KIND OF ATTENTION THE KIM CHI-HA TRIAL WAS RECEIVING ABROAD FOR THE GOVERNMENT IS VERY SENSITIVE TO INTERNATIONAL OPINION AND WILL TAKE IT INTO ACCOUNT WHEN THE DECISION ABOUT

KIM IS MADE.

3. RESPONDING TO A QUESTION AS TO WHY CHURCHES, STUDENTS, INTELLECTUALS OTHERS SEEMED TO BE INACTIVE ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES, CARDINAL KIM STATED THAT MAJOR REASON WAS DIVISION IN THE RANKS OF THOSE WHO WERE OPPOSED TO THE GOVERNMENT ON THIS QUESTION. HE SAID THAT STUDENTS, PROFESSORS, CHURCHMEN WERE SPLIT AND WORKING AGAINST EACH OTHER AND THE KCIA IS ABLE TO EXPLOIT THESE WEAKNESSES. ADDITIONAL REASONS HE LISTED WERE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNMENT IN COWING ITS OPPONENTS, E.G. THE CASES OF KIM CHI-HA, REV. KIM KWAN-SOK; PLUS THE FACT THAT KOREANS WERE GENUINELY SHAKEN BY THE FALL OF VIETNAM AND THE WARLIKE TALK FROM THE NORTH.

4. CARDIANL SAID THAT THE APPEARANCE OF CALM WAS DECEPTIVE BECAUSE BENEATH THE SURFACE THERE WAS GREAT DISSATISFACTION WITH CONDITIONS OF LIFE IN KOREA AND GOVERNMENT SUPPRESSION OF BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS; THIS UNREST WAS BOUND TO WELL UP TO THE SURFACE AGAIN, HE SAID. CARDINAL KIM ENDED THE CONVERSATION BY REMARKING THAT IF ONLY THE GOVERNMENT WOULD ENTER INTO A REAL DIA-LOGUE WITH THE CHURCHES AND OTHER SUCH GROUPS, PROBLEMS COULD BE SOLVED AND TROUBLES AVOIDED. HOWEVER, THE GOVERNMENT ADAMANTLY REFUSES TO DO SO.
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